

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
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AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2584

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, BM
SUBJ: TACHILEK NARCOTICS SEIZURE

REF: BANGKOK 18505

1. AUGUST 23 CHARGE AND EMBOFF MCCARTHY WERE GIVEN, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, UNPRECEDENTED TOUR OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION LABORATORY COMPLEX WHERE WE SAW THE TACHILEK SEIZURE. AT THE TIME ANALYSIS OF THE NARCOTICS WAS STILL CONTINUING ON A ROUND-THE-CLOCK BASIS IN A NEW AND REDIMENTARY NARCOTICS LABORATORY. FINAL FIGURES WILL BE ANNOUNCED TODAY WHICH WILL BE CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT AND SOMEWHAT LARGER THAN PREVIOUS REPORTS. ANALYTICAL METHODS WITH THE AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT ARE VERY SLOW AND THE LABORATORY STAFF APPEARED EXHAUSTED. ONE OFFICER ASKED ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF MORE ADVANCED EQUIPMENT AND MAJOR TIN MAUNG MENTIONED A DEVICE SEEN IN THE SAN DIEGO DEA LABORATORY IN WHICH DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE SHWE THAN IS INTERESTED.

2. THE BURMESE WERE EXULTANT ABOUT THEIR MONUMENTAL SEIZURE. THEY APPRECIATED THE INTELLIGENCE RECEIVED FROM DEA BUT WERE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF THE SPEED, RESOLUTION AND SECURITY WITH
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WHICH THEY HAD ACTED ON IT. IT WAS IMPLICIT THAT THEY COMPARE THEMSELVES FAVORABLY WITH THE THAIS IN THIS REGARD. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT A SERIOUS GAME IS GOING ON WITH REGARD TO THAILAND AND THE GUB THINKS IT IS WAY AHEAD ON POINTS. THE THAI HELICOPTER INCIDENT ADDED SIGNIFICANTLY TO LONG-STANDING DISTRUST. AS NOTED IN OTHER REPORTING, COL. TIN OO STATED THAT THIS DISTRUST MAY GO BEYOND NARCOTICS AND EXTEND TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS. ON RE-

CEIPT OF THE TACHILEK INTELLIGENCE, WHICH GUB AUTHORITIES INITIALLY GREETED WITH SOME DISDAIN, THEY ACTED QUICKLY AND WERE SURPRISED BY THEIR SUCCESS. AT THE SAME TIME THEY PASSED TO DEA INFORMATION ON A REFINERY IN THAILAND. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THEIR INFORMATION WAS ANOTHER TEST OF THAI RELIABILITY. I THINK THEY DECIDED TO DEMONSTRATE AGAIN HOW DECISIVELY THEY CAN ACT AND ARE WAITING FOR WHAT THEY EXPECT TO BE THAI FAILURE TO DO SO. IT IS EVIDENT THAT A SERIOUS EFFORT BY THE THAIS IN THE BORDER AREA, PARTICULARLY ONE BASED ON THE GUB'S INFORMATION, WOULD SERVE OUR INTEREST IN DEVELOPING THAI/BURMESE RELATIONS.

3. ONE TRAGIC NOTE IN THE TACHILEK EPISODE WAS THE DEATH ON AUGUST 22 OF THE ELDEST SON OF THE RANGOON-BASED MAJOR WHO LED THE TACHILEK RAID, HE WAS STRUCK BY A CAR AND KILLED INSTANTLY, THE POLICE ARE NOW INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE DEATH WAS A RETALIATION BY THE TRAFFICKERS. THE TIMING SEEMS TO US TO MAKE THAT UNLIKELY BUT NO DOUBT MANY BURMESE OFFICERS WILL NEVER BE CONVINCED OTHERWISE.

4. REFTTEL REFERRED TO A REWARD FOR THE AGENT WHO DEVELOPED THE INTELLIGENCE ON TACHILEK. THE BURMESE WOULD NOT ACCEPT REWARDS, BUT WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO USE REWARD FUNDS FOR A CONTRIBUTION TO THE GUB'S ARMY AND POLICE WELFARE FUNDS? SUCH A GESTURE WOULD BE CONNECTED TO THE TACHILEK OPERATION BUT WOULD ALSO RECOGNIZE THE MORE ARDUOUS AND CONTINUOUS EFFORTS OF THE MEN WHO CLIMB THE HILLS, OFTEN WITH CASUALTIES, IN THE ANTI-CARAVAN AND
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ANTI-REFINERY OPERATIONS. WE DO NOT KNOW IF THE GUB WOULD ACCEPT SUCH A CONTRIBUTION, EVEN ON A COMPLETELY PRIVATE BASIS, BUT THEY MIGHT APPRECIATE SUCH RECOGNITION.

5. GIVEN THE MAGNITUDE OF THE TACHILEK SEIZURE, I BELIEVE THE BURMESE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE A PUBLIC STATEMENT OF ADMIRATION BY A USG OFFICIAL AT THE HIGHEST APPROPRIATE LEVEL. WITH THIER PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ANTICIPATED FOR TODAY, THEY ARE ALMOST ACHING FOR MAXIMUM WORLDWIDE PUBLICITY. ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE SUCH PUBLICITY WOULD BE USEFUL, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE DRAMA OF THEIR ANNOUNCEMENT WAS UNDERCUT BY THE BANGKOK PRESS STORY OF AUGUST 23, A STORY WHICH THE GUB IS CONVINCED CAME FROM AN USG SOURCE.

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Message Attributes

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